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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Ardrey Concept of territoriality -- that in his dealing with others, man is driven by a "territorial imperative" -- for its possible relevance to the design of more powerful conflict theories of organization. The importance of territoriality is explored as a conceivable precondition necessary to eventual understanding. An effort is made to affect a logical reapprochement of Ardrey's territorial thesis with specific organizational conflict theories such as those of Argyris, Corwin, and Gross, suggesting possible linkage between territoriality and some established organizational concepts including authority, power, role conflict, zone of acceptance, span of control, hierarchy, chain of command, and boundary maintenance. Territoriality is used in the generation of several hypotheses, and implications are drawn for theory and research. (Author)

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TERRITORIALITY: NECESSARY CONCEPT IN CONFLICT THEORIES OF ORGANIZATION?+

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Writing in a recent issue of Public Administration Review, Lipitz has made a plea for organization theorists to consider the feasibility of incorporating the concept of territoriality in modern theories of organization.[1]

> A territory is an area of space, whether of water or earth or air, which an animal or group of animals defends as an exclusive preserve. The word is also used to describe the inward compulsion in animate beings to possess and defend such a space. A territorial species of animals, therefore, is one in which all males, and sometimes females too, bear an inherent drive to gain and defend an exclusive property.[2]

Lipitz refers specifically to the work of Robert Ardrey, author, playwright and sometime amateur anthropologist, who has proposed that man, in his dealings with other men, is driven by a "territorial imperative."[3] Ardrey has stated that

> Man ... is as much a territorial animal as is a mockingbird singing in the clear California night. We act as we do for reasons of our evolutionary past, not our cultural present, and our behavior is as much a mark of our species as is the shape of a human thigh bone or the configuration of nerves in a corner of the human brain. If we defend the title to our land or the sovereignty of our country, we do it for reasons no different, no less innate, no less ineradicable, than do lower animals.[4]

Ardrey's book, The Territorial Imperative, has been accused of having revived and popularized the once-discredited instincts' hypothesis, particularly as applied to aggression and territoriality in man.[5]

As a result, Ardrey's thesis, derived largely from the work of Lorenz,[6] Tinbergen,[7] and others in the emerging field of ethology, recently has become the object of intensive criticism by a distinguished group of scholars.[8]

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While admitting that aggression and territorial behavior perhaps can be observed in man, these critics argue that scientific investigations of lower animal life do not sustain the instinct thesis as it relates to these or other human behaviors. (At least one other scholar, however, has argued that the instinct thesis may indeed possess some validity.[9])

It is not the purpose of this paper to debate further the nature-nurture question of territorial behavior in man, but rather to examine the concept of territoriality for its possible relevance to the design of perhaps more powerful conflict theories of human social organization and to outline a possible strategy for incorporating the concept into such theories, particularly as these theories may relate to conflict in the school.

Territory as Cognitive Space

It has been suggested that territorial behavior in man need not be confined necessarily to geographical space. Lutz, using territoriality in attempting to analyze teacher militancy and the resulting conflicts between teachers and administrators, has proposed that the concept can be applied to the beliefs held by men --- that man will believe they own things other than geographic space and that they will defend these relatively intangible things as well. "These may be referred to as cognitive territory, and men will act to defend this cognitive territory as surely as they defend their geographic territory."[10] (An earlier reference to territory as cognitive space or belief is to be found, as I recall, in the well-known Authoritarian Personality study,[11] where the cold war was described as not so much a war for conquest of geographical territory as for conquest of men's minds or beliefs, a kind of cognitive territory.)

Territoriality, the School and Conflict

Commenting on the present problem of conflict in the schools generated by recent attempts at racial integration, Stephen K. Bailey has observed that "the whole sullen history of animalistic 'territorial imperatives' is being replayed in our high schools --- with 'turf' defined according to the color of racist proprietors."[12] As reported earlier in this paper, Lutz has used the concept of territoriality in his endeavor to explain teacher militancy and conflict between teachers and administrators, underscoring the link between cognitive beliefs (as a kind of territory) and the organizational concept of boundary maintenance.[13]

Now it is tempting to extend this analogical reasoning (using the concepts of territory or territoriality) to encompass such other organizational concepts as authority, power, zone of indifference (or acceptance), span of control, chain of command, role conflict, and so on. Moreover, with a little extra stretch of the imagination, further linkages might be forged between territorial concepts and such organizational conflict theories as that of Argyris,[14] Corwin,[15] and Gross.[16]

It is interesting to speculate, for example, on the similarity between territoriality and Argyris' theory that organizations tend to violate the integrity of the individual, that there is conflict between the system and the individual. Is this not an instance of territorial intrusion --- organization versus individual?

Or, for example, consider Corwin's theory of professionalization versus bureaucratization. Is this not an instance of territoriality operating --- the strain toward worker professionalization functioning to wrest control of work prerogatives (or territory) from management?

Or consider Gross' finding that superintendents and school board members each tended to assign more responsibility to their own position than to the position of the other.[17] Is this not an example of territorial intrusion operating in role theory?

The trouble with this kind of endeavor is that it seldom leads to the development of further theory, for the concept employed in this fashion, territoriality in this case, tends to become merely a repository of assorted meanings, explicitly or implicitly summing up a number of properties of things. In the words of Dubin, such concepts become summative units --- useful in a somewhat global sense, but relatively valueless with regard to the development of theoretical models.[18] Some examples of concepts which have tended to become summative units (or concepts) in the organizational literature might be authority, power, authenticity,[19] informal organization, etc.

This is not to say that summative units (concepts) are of no use whatever, for this is not the case. As Dubin points out, summative units can operate as helpful heuristic and educational devices. They can serve to introduce novices to the vague boundaries of a discipline. They can also be used to link levels of analysis and this is undoubtedly the way in which the concept of territoriality has been invoked in the preceding examples.

While territoriality at first blush tends to inspire considerable confidence in its potential for describing and explaining organizational conflict, the concept as yet has not been translated into a form suitable for constructive use in the development of theoretical models. It will be the remaining task of this paper to provide an example of the way in which territoriality might be translated into such a useable form.

Types of Concepts Useful in Theory Building

Dubin has classified concepts (units) suitable for use in theory construction into four basic or pure types. These are the enumerative unit (concept), the associative unit (concept), the relational unit (concept), and the statistical unit (concept).[20]

According to Dubin, an enumerative unit is a property characteristic of a thing in all its conditions. That is, regardless of the condition of the thing that can be observed or imagined, it will <u>always</u> have that property. The enumerative unit is universal in the sense that it is always present in the thing under consideration and is counted in any sample of the things under investigation. This universality is a significant feature of the enumerative unit; it distinguishes this type of unit from the type of unit considered next, the associative unit.

An associative unit, according to Dubin, is a property characteristic of a thing in only <u>some</u> of its conditions. In all respects except one it is identical to an enumerative unit. The one difference is that there is a real zero or absent value for associative units. Such units are characteristic properties of some, but not all states of a thing. They are associated, in other words, with only some states of the particular thing under investigation, but not with all of them.

A relational unit is a property characteristic of a thing that can be determined only by the relation among properties. These relations, according to Dubin, may be of two general sorts. The first is the relation based on interaction among properties while the second is based on the combination of properties. A relational unit identifies a property of a thing by calling attention to the fact that the property is derivable from at least two other properties.

A statistical unit, quite obviously, is a property of a thing that summarizes the distribution of that property in the thing under investigation. A statistical unit derives its name from the fact that we have adopted statistical terminology dealing with measures of central tendency or of dispersion as the nomenclature for statistical units.

Cognitive Territory as an Enumerative Unit

We will now attempt to translate the concept of cognitive territory into a unit capable of being used in the construction of theoretical models.

Lutz's conception of territory as cognitive belief, coupled with his idea that defense of beliefs represents a kind of boundary maintenance (teachers as a group defending their beliefs of control over work), appears related to some of Rokeach's recent work in attempting to map belief systems.[21] Rokeach's work, in turn, appears related to some observations on lower animals' aggressive and territorial behavior as reported by Lorenz,[22] but we'll first consider Rokeach's work.

Rokeach conceives of five different types of belief systems, each capable of being ordered along a dimension which he refers to as the central-peripheral dimension. Basically, this central-peripheral dimension represents the extent to which these five different belief systems are connected with each other (capable of influencing each other), the intensity with which they may be defended if challenged, and, to a degree, the distance they are from the core of the personality.

Type A beliefs, according to Rokeach, are the most central on the central-peripheral dimension. These beliefs are learned by direct encounter with the object of belief and are reinforced by a unanimous social consensus among all of one's reference groups and reference persons. "I believe my name is John Smith"

is an example of this type of belief.

Type B beliefs are almost as incontrovertible or primitive (taken for granted) as Type A beliefs, but their maintenance does not seem to depend on being shared with others. There are no reference persons or groups outside the self who could controvert such a belief. For example, through intense experience a child may come to believe that he lives in a hostile world or that he is unlovable.

Type C beliefs are referred to as authority beliefs and are conceived as developing out of Type A beliefs. Type C beliefs are nonprimitive and do not seem to have the same taken-for-granted character about them as do the more primitive beliefs as in Type A or B. Type C beliefs seem to be those concerning positive and negative authority --- reference persons or reference groups. Which authorities are we to trust and mistrust, to look to and not to look to, as we go about our daily lives seeking information about the world?

Type D beliefs are derived beliefs. Ideological beliefs originating with religious or political institutions, and derived secondhand through processes of identification with authority rather than direct encounter with the object of belief, are assumed to be Type D beliefs. If we know that a person believes in a particular authority, we should be able to deduce many of his other beliefs. Beliefs concerning matters of fact that are held solely because we trust an authoritative source represent Type D beliefs.

Type E beliefs are referred to as inconsequential beliefs. They seem to represent more or less arbitrary matters of taste. Like Types A and B beliefs, they are incontrovertible because they originate in direct experience with the object of belief and their maintenance does not necessarily require social consensus. Matters of taste are considered to be inconsequential because they have

few or no connections with other beliefs. If changed, they have few or no implications or consequences for maintaining other beliefs involving self-identity or for requiring consistency-restoring organization within the rest of the system.

Rokeach proposes that there is undoubtedly a positive correlation between centrality of belief and the intensity with which such a belief is held, although he sees the relationship as not being a perfect one perhaps.

The central-peripheral dimension used by Rokeach in ordering the five belief systems appears related to some observations on lower animal aggressive and territorial behavior reported by Lorenz. Lorenz reports that in nearing the center of his geographical territory the aggressive urge in an animal appears to increase in geometrical ratio to the decrease in distance from this center.[23]

Now this bears somewhat on Gross' research which found that school superintendents and school board members each tended to assign more responsibility (territory) to their own position than to the position of the other.[24] Inspection of the 13 items on the responsibility questionnaire to which both groups of subjects responded reveals most if not all the items to reflect Type D, derived beliefs. It is interesting to speculate on the intensity of cognitive territorial defense which might result, if these 13 items had represented other types of beliefs as well.

It might be hypothesized that as these responsibility items (belief territories) progress from peripheral to more central types of beliefs along Rokeach's central-peripheral dimension, that the extent of aggressiveness (territorial defense) will increase.

Summary

While the concept of territoriality apparently is attracting the interest of an increasing number of organizational theorists, its real promise --- whether it is a necessary concept in conflict theories of organization --- can be tested only if it is capable of being translated into a conceptual unit suitable for use in the development and construction of theoretical models. For this reason, efforts should continue to be focused on its empirical definition.

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